

## **Battery Buchanan**

Forming the final bastion on the end of Confederate Point was Battery Buchanan. The totally separate battery was a two-tiered elliptical earthwork, approximately 43 feet in height. Four mounted guns commanded both New Inlet and the approach by land. Just after it was completed, it was garrisoned by a detachment from the Confederate States Navy. Nearby, a wharf for large steamers was constructed, although the main docking facility for Fort Fisher was located at Craig's Landing just north of the fort. In the event that the main fort should be overrun, Battery Buchanan could be used as a last holdout until evacuation could be conducted from the wharf (Lamb 1896:353; Sprunt 1992:381-383; Trotter 1989:328; USACOE 1865b,g).

## **Attacks on Fort Fisher**

Federal forces began plans for a joint army-navy attack on Fort Fisher during the fall of 1864. Shortly after the southern forces learned on October 24, 1864, of the impending attack, Confederate general Braxton Bragg assumed command of the defenses of Wilmington. He superseded Gen. W. H. C. Whiting, who remained his second-in-command. The Confederates assembled 1,430 men at Fort Fisher in preparation for the assault. An additional force of 6,000 veterans from Lee's army under the command of Maj. Gen. Robert F. Hoke were located 5 miles up the river at Sugar Loaf. The expected Federal fleet finally arrived off Fort Fisher on the morning of December 20 under the command of Admiral David Porter. Aboard the fifty-six warships that gathered off New Inlet was an army unit of 6,500 infantrymen under the command of Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler (Lamb 1896:357-358; Fort Fisher Master Plan 1974:56-57; Sprunt 1992:493).

The first attempt the Federals made to take the fort began on the night of December 23, when the powder ship *Louisiana*, with more than 215 tons of powder, was exploded within 200 yards of the fort. It was hoped that the blast from the vessel would create a gap in the earthen defense. After a lengthy delay, however, the ship finally exploded at 1:52 A.M. doing no damage. For two days, December 24 and 25, Fort Fisher came under a heavy bombardment that did little destruction. During the afternoon on Christmas day, 2,000 troops under General Butler made an unopposed landing at Battery Anderson, 3 miles up the coast. Unable to advance upon the fort because of artillery fire, General Butler withdrew his troops. On December 27 the Federal vessels sailed north along the coast to Beaufort, North Carolina, having been unsuccessful in their initial effort to capture Fort Fisher (Lamb 1896:357-358,361,366; Fort Fisher Mater Plan 1974:56-57; Sprunt 1992:493; Powell 1968:179).

The Confederates were jubilant at having withstood the land attack of General Butler and the naval bombardment from Admiral Porter's ships. General Bragg, not expecting a renewed attack from the Union forces, ordered Hoke's 6,000 troops into Wilmington in preparation for a move against occupied New Bern. Disappointed with the failure of General Butler to take Fort Fisher, General U. S. Grant replaced Butler with Maj. Gen. Alfred H. Terry and ordered an additional 1,500 troops to ready themselves for a